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Chronicles of the Cape Fear river, 1660-1916. By James Sprunt. [Second edition] (Raleigh: Edwards & Broughton printing company, 1916. 732 p. \$4.00)

In this book a highly cultured author and patron of historical research deals with a river and coastal section of country that is possessed of some natural beauty, that favors a commercial life, that has long been blessed with a cultured society, and that has witnessed a wealth of romantic incidents. Nearly two-thirds of the volume chronicles events that have occurred subsequent to the outbreak of the civil war, and during this entire period the author himself has been a prominent actor in the drama. His large success in business and the great esteem in which he has been held by his fellow men have so endeared the community to him that he often warms to a charming fervor of style in the recital of his personal reminiscences. He has also thoroughly searched public records, local newspapers, and some private correspondence, and to his own narratives, which are often rich in historical detail, he has added numerous excerpts from the best that has been written by others.

Having rapidly discussed and conclusively settled the question regarding the origin of the name Cape Fear the author proceeds by short chapters with the subjects of the Cape Fear Indians; exploration and settlement; colonial plantations; social conditions; the Cape Fear region in the war of independence; the growth of the city of Wilmington with accompanying notable incidents; river and harbor improvements; the building of railroads, "interesting memories;" brief biographical sketches of a long list of confederate heroes; Cape Fear pilots and blockade running to and from Fort Fisher during the civil war; the trade and commerce of Wilmington; the municipal government of Wilmington; Wilmington newspapers; the North Carolina Society of Colonial Dames; Wilmington churches; and Wilmington schools.

The chapters on the Cape Fear pilots and on blockade running are particularly noteworthy. They are a substantial contribution to the naval and economic history of the civil war; they are alive with romantic incidents; and here the author's style is at its best. "From early youth," he writes, "I have loved the Cape Fear River, the ships and sailors which it bears upon its bosom. As a boy I delighted to wander along the wharves where the sailing ships were moored with their graceful spars and rigging in relief against the sky-line. . . . In later years, I heard the stories of the old-time Cape Fear gentlemen, whose memories I revere, and I treasured those annals of our brave and generous people; I knew all the pilots of the Cape Fear, whose records of brave deeds and unswerving loyalty to the Confederacy . . . are worthy of all praise." The author himself was purser on the blockade runner

Lilian, was taken prisoner, escaped, and subsequently served as purser on the *Susan Bierne*.

The text of the first edition of this book, which appeared in 1914, has been expanded one hundred pages in this the second edition, and for the grievously inadequate index of five and one-half pages in the first edition has been substituted in the second a carefully prepared index of forty-four pages.

The historical value of the book is somewhat impaired by exaggeration, by excessive eulogy, by an almost exclusively local point of view, and by religious prejudice. On page 604 we read: "The people of the Southern States throughout most of their history have been more homogeneous than those of the North and West, and have maintained their ancestral faiths with a steadiness almost unknown in some parts of our country. They have clung tenaciously to the great essentials of the Christian system, have been quick to see the insufficiency of modern substitutes for the Gospel of God's grace, and have turned a deaf ear to the exponents of mushroom religions."

Who but a North Carolinian could write the following paragraph?

"Through the quiet lanes of Orton to the ruins of Governor Tyron's palace is half a mile. Here is the cradle of American independence; for upon this spot, until recently hidden by a dense undergrowth of timber, occurred, between six and seven o'clock on the evening of the 19th of February, 1766, the first open resistance to the British Stamp Act in the American colonies, by 450 armed men, who surrounded the palace and demanded the surrender of the custodian of the obnoxious symbols of the King's authority." (p. 59.)

The statement on page 538 that the earthquake of August 31, 1886, "nearly destroyed the city of Charleston" is clearly an exaggeration. The idea that must be conveyed by the statement on page 6 that the Black river enters the Cape Fear river "from the east" is not correct.

NEWTON D. MERENESS

Letters on the condition of Kentucky in 1825. Reprinted from the *Richmond Enquirer*. Edited by Earl Gregg Swem, assistant librarian, Virginia state library. [Heartman's historical series, number 22] (New York: Charles F. Heartman, 1916. 76 p. \$2.50)

The eight letters herewith reprinted contain much information regarding Kentucky characters and Kentucky conditions at the date indicated. The state was then passing through an economic crisis in which its credit and its judiciary alike suffered. Four of the letters treat of the existing turmoil in politics and describe the chief leaders of the relief and anti-relief parties, as the contending factions were then locally